THE MESSENGER

Roerich's Paintings

BRAHMAVIDYASHRAMA
ADYAR, MADRAS
1925

"The Messenger"
Nicholas Roerich

Blavatsky Museum
Adyar

"THE MESSENGER"

(ROERICH'S PAINTINGS)

SEVEN ARTICLES

BY

FRANCES ADNEY, LEONID ANDREYEV,
PROF. ALEXANDER KAUN, JOSEPH FINGER,
N. JARENTSOV, I. DE MANZIARLY,
SERGE WHITMAN

1925

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THE REALM OF ROERICH

By Leonid Andreyev

The last work of L. Andreyev published during his lifetime.
(*Translated by Alexander Kaun for "The New Republic."*)

IT is impossible not to admire Roerich. One cannot pass by his precious canvases without experiencing a deep emotion. Even for the layman, who perceives art vaguely as though in a dream, and accepts it only insomuch as it reproduces familiar reality, Roerich's paintings are full of a strange enchantment. So does a magpie admire a diamond, ignorant of its great and especial value for men. For the wealth of Roerich's colours is boundless, and endless too is his bounty, always surprising, always gladdening one's eyes and mind. To see a Roerich picture means to see something *new*, something you have never and nowhere seen, not even among Roerich's own works. There are excellent painters who always remind one of some person and some thing. Roerich may remind one only of those charming, sacred dreams which appear to none but pure youths and patriarchs, and for a moment link their mortal souls with the world of unearthly revelations. And so, not even understanding Roerich, at times disliking him, as the ignorant dislike all that is baffling and incomprehensible,

the crowd meekly bows down before his radiant beauty.

Hence, the road of Roerich is the road of fame. The Louvre and San Francisco, Moscow and eternal Rome, have already become safe depositories for his creative revelations. All Europe, so distrustful of the East, has paid the tribute of homage to the great Russian artist. At the present moment, when the grandeur and future of Russia sway so terribly in the world balance, we Russians must accept this gift of the artist with particular trembling and gratitude.

But neither the simple-minded, bewildered layman, nor the professional painter with his specific ecstasy for Roerich's mastery, is in a position to enjoy in full measure the peculiar genius of an artist who has no peers. This joy is given only to him who has been able to penetrate into Roerich's world, into his great realm, who has succeeded in divining and reading the hidden meaning of his runes through the veil of their beauty. Roerich is not a servant of the earth—he is the creator and the sovereign of a whole enormous world, of an extraordinary dominion. Columbus discovered America, another sliver of the old familiar earth, he prolonged the line already marked out—and he is still being glorified and praised. Then what shall one say of a man who, *amidst the visible, discovers the*

unseen, and bestows upon us, not the continuation of an old world, but an entirely new, most beautiful world?

A whole new world!

The genius of Roerich's fantasy reaches the border of clairvoyance. To describe one's world as Roerich describes it is within the power of him alone who has not only imagined this world, and continues to imagine it, but who has seen it with his eyes and who sees it continually. Intangible images, deep and complex like dreams, he clothes as it were in the beautiful clearness of mathematical formulas, in a colourfulness of hues where, behind the most unexpected transitions and combinations, one invariably feels the truth of a Creator. Free from effort, lithe as a dance, Roerich's art never leaves the circle of divine logicalness. On the peaks of ecstasy, in the most blazing intoxication, in the gloomiest visions, terrible and full of meaning like the prophecies of the Apocalypse, his god remains the blissfully harmonious Apollo. Strange to say, in the presentation of his subjective world, Roerich has attained that degree of objectivity at which the most improbable and unthinkable, for instance, his *Woodsprites*, or *House of the Spirit*, becomes convincing and indubitable—truth itself, for he has seen it. Here is where one may see the highest grade of creative power, the last step of clairvoyance. It seems at times as

though Roerich photographed the pictures and images of his non-existing world—so real are they. How strange it is to say: The view of a doomed city, the 'facade' of a house of the Spirit! . . . Does it exist?

Yes, it exists, this beautiful world, this realm of Roerich, of which he is the sole Tsar and Ruler. Though charted on no maps, it is real and exists no less than the province of Orel or the kingdom of Spain. And as people journey to foreign lands one may journey thither, later to narrate at length of its riches and extraordinary beauty, of its people, of its terrors, joys and sufferings, of its skies, clouds, and prayers. There are dawns and sunsets, different from ours, but no less magnificent. There are saints and warriors, peace and war, life and death, there are even conflagrations, with their monstrous reflection on the distraught clouds. There are seas and skiffs—no, not our sea and not our skiffs: our terrestrial geography knows no such wise and deep sea, with rocks on its banks, that are like the Tables of the Testament. There they know much, there they see deep; in the silence of the earth and of the skies there sound words of divine revelation. And in a moment of distraction one may, in one's mortal way, envy the man Roerich, who sits on a high bluff, and sees—sees! such a beautiful world, a world wise, metamorphosed,

translucently brilliant and reconciled, sublimated to the height of superhuman eyes.

Seeking for the familiar in the strange, ever striving to explain the heavenly through the earthly, people generally call Roerich a painter of hoary Varengian antiquity, a poet of the North, intending thus to bring him nearer to comprehension. I deem this an error. Roerich is not a servant of the earth, either in its past or in its present; he is all in his *own* world, and he does not depart from it. Even when the artist pursues the modest aim of presenting pictures of the earth, when his canvases are named *The Conquest of Kazan*, or *Decorations to Peer Gynt*, even then he, 'sovereign not of these parts,' remains the creator of a different world: such a Kazan was never conquered by Ivan the Terrible, such a Norway the traveller has never seen. But it is very possible that precisely such a Kazan and such a battle did the terrible Tsar see in his dreams, when, in the name of Christ, in the name of his peasant, Christian, apostolic Russia, he raised his sword against the Unbeliever. And it is very possible that precisely such a Norway did the poet, fantast, luckless Peer Gynt perceive in his dreams—a sweet Norway, most fair and beloved. Here it is as though the wondrous world of Roerich and the old, familiar earth converged, and this is

so because all those for whom the free sea of dream and contemplation has opened, well-nigh inevitably land at Roerich's shores which are 'not of these parts'.

But for this one must love the North. The fact of the matter is that the uncharted realm of Roerich is also situated in the North. In this sense—but in this only—Roerich is the only poet of the North, the only singer and interpreter of its mystically mysterious soul, profound and wise like its black rocks, contemplative and gentle like the pale verdure of the northern spring, sleepless and lucid like its white flickering nights. It is not that gloomy North of the realistic painters, where there is the end of light and life, where Death has erected his scintillating throne of ice and greedily looks upon the hot earth with his whitish eyes. Here is the beginning of life and light, here is the cradle of wisdom and of sacred words about God and man, about their eternal love and eternal struggle. The proximity of death merely lends an aerialness to the contours of this beautiful land, and gives it that light, luminous, almost untrembling, sadness which suffuses all the colours of Roerich's world. For clouds also die! Each sunrise also dies! Only that grass can be as green as Roerich's grass, which knows of the advent of winter and death after the brief summer.

And yet another, most important thing, may be said about the world of Roerich—it is a world of Truth. What the name of this Truth is I do not know, but then who knows the name of Truth? Yet its presence invariably agitates the onlooker, and illumines his thoughts with a peculiar quaint light. One feels as though the artist had rid man of all the excrescent, all the superfluous, evil and disturbing elements, had embraced him and the earth with a glance of love —and had sunk into deep meditation, had sunk into deep meditation descrying something . . . One prays for stillness, lest a single sound, or a rustle, disturb this profound thought of man.

Such is the realm of Roerich.

Any attempt at transmitting its enchanting beauty through words must be fruitless. That which has been thus expressed in colour will not tolerate the rivalry of words and stands in no need of them. But—if jesting be permitted in such a serious matter—it might not harm to send a whole grave, whiskered expedition to investigate Roerich's kingdom. Let them survey and measure, let them cogitate and calculate; then let them write a history of this new land, and chart it on the maps of human revelations, where only a very few artists have created and fortified their kingdoms.

NICHOLAS ROERICH, F.T.S.

By Frances Adney

OUR famous Russian brother has many official designations other than the simple title indicated by the letters F.T.S. It is as a true Theosophist, however, a harmoniser and a unifier, that he has been able to hold such seemingly conflicting offices as Honoured Member Academician of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, Petrograd; Director of the School for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, Moscow; Professor in the Imperial Petrograd Archæological Institute; President of perhaps a dozen highly conservative and academic institutions; and yet simultaneously that of first President of that rebellious group of innovators *Mir Iscusstva*—the World of Art. Before he exiled himself from Russia, rather than accept a post offered him by the Bolsheviks, he was President of the Council of the Red Cross Art Workshops for Disabled Soldiers, Petrograd, and President of the Council of Courses of Architecture for Women in the same city. Since leaving Russia, he has identified himself with the Finnish Artists' Society, of Helsingfors, and the Anglo-Russian Literary Society of London. Member of the British T.S. during his London residence, he has been transferred to the American Section, to

which he is a valued acquisition. Since the beginning of his artistic career he has been a leader in the struggle for self-expression and free attitudes in art; yet never as an iconoclast or disrupting force has he worked. He has won the love and respect of various, sometimes diametrically opposed, schools and movements in his native land. Since reaching America he has formed an international Society, "*Cor Ardens*" in Chicago, April, 1921 and a "Master School of United Arts" in New York City.

Born in Petrograd, September 27th, 1874, son of a distinguished barrister, he was destined for the Bar by his father, who sent him to the University for the requisite law courses. He was destined by his genius, and his own unalterable will, for Art. In the blue uniform of a university student he presented himself at the Academy of Art. In about three years he won his University degree and at the same time gained a diploma from the Art Academy by his first painting, *The Messenger*. Working above his brain consciousness, Roerich wrought a thing of art which was personally prophetic, as several of his later large canvases are seen to have been unconscious prophecies of the World War. An imposing promontory with a *kreml*, a stretch of water and a rude boat, a figure standing at the craft's stern, and a patriarchal giant seated in the bow—these formed the outer aspects of *The Messenger*. The inner significance went

even beyond the ordinary interpretation of a vessel bringing treasures from the remote past, steering a course through new seas. It indicated the unfailing guidance of The Master. Those for whom the things of the spirit count find in Roerich's work many similar evidences of a victory over the impediments of matter. But even the materialist, Maxim Gorky, has called him the greatest of modern Intuitivists. This picture was purchased at once by the Moscow Museum. Parental opposition vanished, and the young man was sent to Paris to complete his studies. He remained utterly himself—virile, straightforward, with a noble individualism which could not be contaminated. While a student in Paris, he painted one of his strong canvases of Pagan Russia. The exclamation of his instructor, Cormon, at the sight of it, freely translated, was: "We should learn from you! We are too dandified."

A direct descendant from Rurik the Viking, our artist, as a youth, had a passionate love for Nature. His daily wanderings about the parental estate of perhaps ten thousand acres led him to muse upon and finally to explore secretly immense burial mounds of elder days. Such excavations at that time were unlawful; and to the joy of finding rich archæological relics was added the thrill of a dangerous occupation. Archæology has been one of the many interests of his versatile mind, and the

collection which he lost, because he would not join forces with the Bolsheviks, numbered about 75,000 objects, illustrating the Stone Age. . . .

A prolific artist, Roerich has more than seven hundred canvases to his credit; and he seems not yet to have reached the zenith of his power. In addition to easel pictures, he has done many remarkable large murals. One of America's foremost architects, Alfred C. Bossom, hails him as a co-worker for the new architectural ideals of this country:

Of all the great artists of to-day, probably Professor Nicholas K. Roerich has the most significant message for American architecture. . . He appreciates the requirements of architecture as few artists do, owing to the natural bent which led him into archæological studies. . . "He is a past-master in colour harmonies, yet he is so severe with himself that he rejects the temptation of a colour-play when the subject or surroundings do not demand it."

His work has had a very remarkable influence on the lay mind in Russia. During the war he received numerous letters from men at the front who wrote that they had seen his flames, his conflagrations, his darkness, his clouds and rocks; he literally had opened a new window to the souls of simple characters. One feels that he has a story to translate for minds of lesser insight, that he is an idealist to whom the great realities are but a suggestion of what is beyond, and that endless observation of a work of his will not lessen its interest. It carries 'a thought for all time,' so necessary in any work of art such as a mural decoration that is to be in a permanent location. . . His work is not too realistic, yet is sufficiently so to excite contemplation again and again. . . It has a scale and a depth which does not introduce a false perspective. . . . He is cosmopolitan in understanding; the Slavic traditions of the North brought him vigour; the East, intense colour; the South, mysticism; and the West, realism. . . .

Professor Roerich's work has a distinct message because, like that of the Renaissance masters, it is a radical, modern expression of contemporary life, yet is sure, serene and permanent.

All Russian museums or art-galleries of consequence own some of Roerich's canvases and designs for decorative art, and many of his works have been seen throughout Europe. Rome, Paris, Vienna, Prague, Venice, Milan, Brussels, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Chicago and San Francisco, all have some of his paintings. He a master of the composition of theatrical scenery, having been first inspired to compose settings for Wagner's "Valkyries"—"not to order, but for himself". He harmonises his creations with the music of operas and the spirit of dramas. Among his stage decorations are the "Tzar-Saltan" series, the "Prince Igor," the "Sadko," the "Snegourochka"; Maeterlinck's "Princess Maleine" and "Sister Beatrice"; and many a *motif* from popular Russian folk-tales. Other types of expression are his designs for mosaic stained glass and book illustrations.

Scholar and archæologist, Nicholas Roerich is essayist and poet as well as artist. He has written impressions of his travels, discussions of archæology, analyses of ancient ikons. His book of poems, *Morya's Flowers*, has now been published in Europe, and awaits an English translation. . . .

An inspiring series of his essays is now running in *The Herald of the Star*; there is also a long, majestic poem by this versatile genius. Like all truly great souls, a sweet humility breathes forth from his creations. It is the little people that strut and boast. Roerich, who has achieved so much, says:

When I get knowledge, I think there is some one who knows better.
When I can, I think there may be some
Whose power strikes firmer and deeper—
And behold! I know not, and I cannot.
Thou, who comest in the dead of night,
Tell me, in the silent way
What have I willed and what accomplished in my life.
Put Thy hand upon my head
And then I shall regain my will and my power.
And what I willed in my dreams at night
Will be remembered in the hours of morning.

The reception of the Roerich exhibition (numbering nearly two hundred paintings), now on tour in U.S.A., speaks eloquently of the heart-hunger of the masses for something real and at the same time ideally suggestive in Art. Everywhere the people are enthusiastic; and reports come in of its remarkable power to stimulate the imagination of school children. Occultists, mystics, children and highly sensitive women are probably his best appreciators and interpreters. He has been called the Walt Whitman of painting. A student may find

many parallelisms. Like Whitman, he trusts profoundly the intuition of women.

An example of the interpretive power of a sensitive woman—the more interesting because it was a wholly unconscious bit of psychism—was given to me. After describing the wonderful colour, and the wild and 'viking' strangeness of some of the pictures, she said: "I did not understand them all. One, for instance, was named *Sons of Heaven*. I saw no connection whatever between title and painting. There were four women in various attitudes beside a mass of rock; and out of the sky came four rays of golden light, each ray touching one of the women." She was astonished when I opened the illustrated catalogue, which showed, in a majestic cloud formation, mistily outlined, gigantic, masculine figures. She had not seen the clouds, nor any suggestion of a figure.

Since it seemed possible that the rays of light which she reported might be in the painting, although not reproduced, I gave that picture particular attention when I visited the exhibition. Not one ray of light was painted; and the billowy masses of cloud were all in soft rose and violet tones. There was no other canvas in the exhibition with which she could have confused it. What she saw was the *interpretation*, for

it was painted to illustrate *Genesis*, vi, in one of its most spiritual aspects.

Some of Whitman's pages carry a taint. There were times when his deep immersion in matter clouded his spiritual vision, and he wrote down some of the coarse, gross aspects of *Māyā*. If, as his friends asserted and as is probable, he touched Cosmic Consciousness at intervals, it still left a part of his nature unregenerate. In Roerich's work is many a gleam suggesting the cosmic; but evidence of his profound purification is always present. To a commonplace, weak-headed realist, his creations may at times appear fantastic; but there is no taint; they are never erotic, sensual or unwholesome. His compositions suggest a soul in which the purity of northern snows combines with the golden warmth of fire and sunlight. His is the flashing vision which has pierced rock and sod, cloud and the heart of man, and has come forth from all contacts uncontaminated. Whitman, loving Nature, was not content to enjoy her solitary pageants. Humanity must be near; and he would have huddled down in the mire with it, rather than turn aside from it to Nature, as Thoreau so gladly did. Roerich has many notes, and his representations of some phases of Nature suggest the Yogin who through love has become one with her; yet perhaps his most insistent note is human, Man's

place in the Universe being in his estimation the most important of all phenomena. His effort, however, is ever verging upward. He would interpret humanity, but at the same time he would uplift it. He would never make his love for mankind an excuse for imitating the vices of mankind, not even the most ingratiating ones.

Many of the paintings in this exhibition invited description and comment. One of those which a Theosophist could least afford to omit was the large canvas, *The Treasure of the Angels.* This, although relatively sombre in colouring, lacking the sparkle and glow of some of his later productions, attests actual contact with the ḍeva kingdom. Many figures enrich the scene, but the central ḍeva holds the attention. Very capable, exceedingly determined, he positively will do the work appointed, the guarding of the treasure. He is as far as possible from conventional angels that simper and lounge about dreamily. And his eyes, turned to the left from whence danger may be expected, are the strange orbs of one who has never belonged to the human evolution—deep, fathomless eyes from which a weak human being might instinctively shrink. The guarded treasure is an enigmatic, spheroidal body, covered with symbols and hieroglyphics in deep yet bright blue.

One who is not clairvoyant may not state that devas attend his exhibition; yet any sensitive person may feel an influence there which transcends the ordinary human. It is only by stilling the lower manas and reaching the meditative mood that his creations can be truly enjoyed, and that enjoyment is scarcely analysable. It is like coming into touch with higher realms. The impulse is to raise the hands in thanksgiving to the Master who has aided His disciple to do a noble work, and to give fleeting hints of the real but ever invisible spaces where the spirit is clothed in garments of light.

With a mission to take Art to the People, and a message for the masses, Nicholas Roerich has also a vital message for artists. Some of the best of them, haunted by the unreality underlying their realism, recognise this. One whose paintings command very high prices said: "I am heartsick with all this commercialism and objectivity. Roerich is subjective. He has something for me." Many artists, dissatisfied with the mediocrity and monotony of their transcripts of the physical plane, have been reaching out and beyond. As many of their productions unhappily testify, however, they have not understood that they must stretch upward as well as outward. Without steadily polarising above, their passive waiting for inspiration tends to become

grossly mediumistic, leading to vulgar, purgatorial midways, or various scorchings at terrestrial fires. Dissatisfaction with the old and a clumsy fumbling for the new have produced chaotic confusion in Art. Many pictures on public exhibition suggest the fell determination to do something different, even if it has to be something violent. Above all laws of technique towers that law of polarisation, the absolute necessity for reaching *upward* for inspiration. As the Puritans seemed afraid of Beauty, identifying religion with bareness and ugliness, so many artists now seem afraid of religion. They have turned cheap copyists of realistic but relatively meaningless scraps of beauty. But just as Beauty basically underlies religion, so must true religion walk hand in hand with Beauty, if ever cosmic truth is to be suggested by Art. Beauty and devotion are of the Spirit, the Reality. Deeply devotional and truly spiritual, Nicholas Roerich has a mystic message somewhat akin to those "breathings of a higher life, a deva-life," which appeared in *The Theosophist* under the title "Inspirations" in October, 1914. There the Angel said :

> In ancient times there were no 'artists,' but only priests and priestesses. When religious ceremonial was no longer performed by *these* artists, it lost its power. They wandered into the world ; but what could they do, divorced from religion ? . . .

We (*viz.*, the great devas) mean something more by 'artist' than you mean. There are forms on all planes. The Master-Artist works on, and with, causal forms as well as with lesser. He prepares these, helps them to form themselves into great, basic ideas—in sound, in 'form,' in picture. The true artist who worships the Master simply endeavours to bring his works, *already there in inner worlds*, out into the physical . . . The reason that true art is always 'before its time,' is because the forms which the Master makes are for the instruction and uplifting of humanity.

And again the Angel said :

The real life of the Brotherhood of Arts must be centred in a veritable temple-service as of old. No need of much external formula—just this : all conditions which subserve the gaining of *inspiration*—and a *constant access to the source* of *inspiration* . . . *quiet, purity, harmony, dedication.*

Nicholas Roerich would have freedom, not license, prevail in the World of Art. He believes that each true, strong artist should evolve his own technique. In these days when, to use his own words, the struggle between mechanical civilisation and the culture of the Spirit is reaching a decisive point, the recognition of Spiritual Unity as a basis for all creative work is a necessity. A sense of reality can only be conveyed by a harmony of form and colour with the spiritual, inmost verity. Art, says he, is not a luxury, but an indispensable element of human existence. He dreams of great and beautiful temples which may be the permanent homes of noble works of Art, and the international meeting-places of artists and peoples.

With the earnestness and directness of an ardent disciple, he has already formed the nuclei of such temples in the two organisations above mentioned. May he have the support of all workers for the Masters, for the opposing currents are and will be formidable.

Against an unbearable accuracy of realism, which is as much out of place in a painting as an inventory would be in a poem, all who love pure art should set their faces. And with slovenly half-measures, where the artist daubs on blotches of colour, trusting to God and his palette knife, but chiefly to the latter, there should be little compromise. Poetic, true, inspirational painting, unfettered by clogs of scholastic rules, will be a vast, uplifting force in the preparation for the New Era. It is such an international language that our brother speaks, and would help others to speak and to understand.

NICHOLAS K. ROERICH

By N. JARINTZOV

IT appears as if in the course of the last fifteen years or so Russia had been unveiling to the Western World her artistic gifts. The preliminary stage of this process came long ago—with Turgenev's novels. Then followed a long period nourished almost entirely by the interest in Tchaikovsky's music. After that, two entirely different features of Russian art arrested the keen attention of the Westerner—namely, Dostoievsky's writings and the ballet. Opinion on Dostoievsky divided into two camps; the fascination of the ballet never wavered. Then came an onrush of Russian music generally, which made its way triumphantly. With it came a fuller stream of Russian literature; but it was brought to a standstill before the essentially Russian element —that Russian speech which is inseparable from the old Russian wording and phrasing. Gogol, Stchedrin, and the playwright Ostrovsky will remain for ever almost untranslatable, because even William Morris' John Ball would not dream of their speech; the poetic as well as colloquial forms which existed several centuries ago are still life-throbbing and natural to a

Russian, side by side with his ceaseless creating of new words. Some of our modern writers must be classed as past-masters in the beauty of that unadulterated old-Russian speech—A. Remizov, V. Ivanov, and also N. K. Roerich.

But there is one more sphere in Russian art, an immense sphere, the language of which is universal—the art of painting. It is known in the West through a few artists only; and N. K. Roerich—the Academician, Professor and Director of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts—is among the few already appreciated in Western Europe and in some of the big centres of America. He certainly should be ranked amongst the pioneers (the other already known painters are Vroubel, Somov, Serov, Benois) because his 'language' is more universal than that of any artist. It is not only international, but 'interplanetary'. It appeals not only to the mystical Russian, but to all those ever-widening circles in the intellectual world whence searchlights are sent into eternity, and where human senses can already discern the whispers of Cosmic life.

In our days the struggle between 'mechanical civilisation' and 'the culture of spirit' (to use Mr. Roerich's own expressions) is reaching a decisive point. When an artist to whom it is given to reflect the colours,

the sounds, and the thoughts engendered in Infinity remains whole-heartedly within the vibrations linking him with it, he makes them tangible to all; but it must be a whole-hearted, spontaneous attitude on the part of the artist; only then does he stand as one of the leaders clearly outlined on the summit of the mountain where the battle is raging.

One of such leaders is the Russian Academician, N. K. Roerich. "Man cannot be the king of Nature; he is her pupil. I have never felt inclined to paint mere portraits. Man's place in the Universe—that is what is important," Mr. Roerich said to me the other day. This oneness of mind and heart with the artistic gift is the key to the convincingness of his creations. They fill you with the desire of hearkening, expectant, to the whispers of Eternity. The silence of Roerich's northern waterways speaks. The weight of his rocks and ancient walls breathes life.

"Wonderful landscapes?" No, it is not the landscape itself. Nearly always there is somewhere, often most unobtrusive, a human figure or figures doing something full of meaning. And yet their action is not the main thing either; it is not underlined by the artist, there is no finesse, no intended subtlety; it is simply "Man's place in the Universe". In other words, the only thing that matters.

Everything in Roerich's works, viewed from the ordinary standpoint, looks fantastic; yet all meets the eye of the onlooker as if it had always existed in the hidden depths of his own vision. Therein, in spite of the essentially Russian forms, Roerich is not only Russian, but human in the broadest sense. He is above theory, above tendency, even above style as such. He is not a follower of any other artist, or school, although some compare him to Gauguin, Blake, or Vroubel, others see the spirit of the Far East and Byzantium in his mural decorations and ikons. But he devotedly follows his own path, linking up for him humanity with the spirit of the Cosmos. One without the other is impossible to him.

A profound study of the Stone Age and his own excavations in Russia have given Roerich a complete grasp of the inner spirit of ancient life. The old Russian churches, cities, and homesteads on his canvases breathe of their intimacy with their mother-soil. Russia has lived through so many turmoils that people who have had to defend themselves have held on to that soil fast and firm. Outside, there unfolded itself the vast beloved land, to grow corn on, or to fight for, or to gaze at with its passing foreign caravans. Inside, within the thick walls beset with the turrets and porches of the younger generations, there lurked the naïve life

where the seclusion of women, the wise old men's predominant place, the ideals of hermit life, the hiding of treasures, and the fascinations of the Byzantine church nestled side by side. Roerich loves the simple atmosphere of that life and its legends : it forms a natural setting for the truth-throbbing vision which inflames his art. " Inspiration is absolutely real. All art creations exist before we sense and materialise them," says he.

N. K. Roerich is descended from a Scandinavian family that came over and settled in Russia in Peter the Great's time. Now, no one could be more Russian—in the knowledge of, and love for, all essentially Russian conceptions of Spirit, Art, and Beauty. Roerich is a writer and a poet too. The titles of his paintings are stately, sonorous, unhurried—untranslatable in their ancient poesy. His essays on ancient Russia unfold a panorama that makes you hold your breath. If Russia herself (instead of the Bolsheviks) offered him all the opportunities for the application of his gifts—he might rejuvenate that exhausted country by reimbuing her with the charms of her own youth !

Russia has absorbed the elements of beauty from all who ever crossed her land, not only from the hired Scandinavian princes and warriors, from their reckless highwaymen and merchants, from the Byzantine missionaries and the Asiatic caravans, but even

from her oppressors, the Tartars. All these elements became blended in the mind of the unsophisticated Russian with the clarity of his primitive conceptions, with that clarity which is the more striking, the more mystical the object of the idea would seem to be. It is this very clarity, this simplicity of greatness, that is reflected in Roerich's works.

Roerich was born in 1874. From 1893 to 1897 he was a student at the Petrograd University, and at the same time at the Academy, in Professor Kuindji's class. In 1915 Russia celebrated the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Academician's artistic activity. Long before that time he was the first President of the Society or group called "The World of Art," amongst the leaders of which were Serov, Vroubel, Somov, Bakst, Benois, and other artists well known in Europe; Director of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts; Member of the Paris "Salon d'Automne" and the Rheims Academy; also of the Vienna Secession, his connection with which he severed in 1914.

In 1907 Roerich was first inspired to compose scenery for an opera (Wagner's "Valkyries"), "not to order, but for himself"; very soon he became a past-master in that branch of art, wonderfully harmonising his creations with the music of the operas and the spirit of the dramas. His were the sceneries for several

operas in Sergey Diaghilev's productions, and for plays at the Moscow Art Theatre and the Ancient Theatre. He has recently completed the scenery for Rimsky Korsakov's " Tsar Saltan " (Pushkin's fairy-tale), in pursuance of a commission given by Sir Thomas Beecham.

The Pochayev Cathedral and two or three private chapels are adorned with numerous mural paintings, done with Roerich's ever-present inspiration and love, both for the subject and the technique suitable for it. He also worked enthusiastically for two years at Talashkino, the famous estate of Princess M. Tenisheva, where Ruskin and William Morris would have found all their ideals carried out by a group of inspired and inspiring people.

There is no museum or art-gallery in Russia that does not own Roerich's canvases and designs for decorative art. In all, his creations number now over twelve hundred. A good many of them have been acquired by the National Gallery in Rome, the Louvre (Pavillon Marsan) and the Luxembourg museums in Paris, and public art-galleries in Vienna, Prague, Venice, Milan, Malmo, Brussels, Chicago, Stockholm, San Francisco, and Copenhagen. London saw some of Roerich's works at the Exhibition of Post-Impressionists in 1911.

Besides being a connoisseur, Roerich has also been an ardent collector of old paintings. He possessed a

valuable collection of these in Petrograd, the fate of which is unknown, because he would not accept the high post offered to him by the Bolsheviks. . . .

He does not claim to be the founder of a school: ever discovering new harmonies between colour, line, and spirit, he thinks that every one should work out for himself his own conceptions and technique.

The main series that can be traced in Roerich's paintings (leaving aside his church frescoes and decorative productions) are as follow:

(1) The Saints and Legends.—*St. Procopius, the Righteous, blessing the Unknown Travellers*; *St. Tiron discovering the Arrow sent to him from Heaven*, etc. All these paintings breathe of the power of spiritual calm, although the heavenly word is nowhere enforced upon the onlooker: it is only a characteristic tone in the general harmony of the composition.

(2) The Fascinations of the Stone Age.—To this category belongs the canvas depicting the aborigines in some arctic region invoking the sun which is a living entity to them, as well as the one called *The Idols*—a shrine the like of which must have existed in ancient Russia on the top of many a hill overlooking open vistas. Another version of this painting contains a figure of an old initiate shielding his eyes from the sun and absorbed in the speaking silence of the distance. This work

was completed in Paris, where Roerich worked for a year (1900) under Cormon. Cormon fully realised the untrammelled bent of Roerich's genius ; encouraging it, he said: "We shall learn from you. *Nous sommes trop raffinés.*"

(3) Landscape, and Old Russian Architecture.—*The Call of the Bells* shows a nook in Old Pskov, where the figure of the angel on the church wall is part and parcel of the responsive atmosphere.

(4) The Spells of Russia.—Wizards, enchanted places, hidden treasures, spirits of eternal fairy tales, maleficent animals, a beautiful horseman ever guarding a city from evil powers (*The Enchanted City*), a little aboriginal creature furtively hiding his treasures. It seems to be the fate of Russians to hide their treasures! Numbers of them are being hidden now, just as they had to be hidden in the tumultuous times of yore. No wonder that whole codes of magic rules have come into being, teaching how to handle treasures both in hiding them and in searching for them. A hidden treasure is almost a living creature ; it has its own whims and moods, it can choose to be benevolent or mischievous.

(5) In 1913-1914 another order of creations came into existence through the intuition of the master : it may be designated "The Prophetic Paintings".—To

this group belong: *The Lurid Glare*, which later on appeared to be the symbol of Belgium; *The Doomed City*, a lifeless city encircled by an enormous serpent; *The Messenger*, a phantom boat standing motionless before unapproachable cliffs; *Human Deeds*, wise men contemplating a heap of ruins; *The Cry of a Serpent*, since the creation of which Roerich learned of an Eastern legend that a serpent utters a cry when it apprehends the approach of peril to its country.

The Last Angel came with the series of the prophetic pictures; but Mr. Roerich cannot explain any details. Why is it the 'last' Angel? What is his message to poor earth overwrought by the chaos and flames around him? What does his spear mean? All the master knows about it are the four (untranslatable) lines which came to him together with the picture as its title. Approximately, they mean the following:

"And the beautiful, ever beautiful,
The terrible, ever terrible,
Last Angel
Flew o'er the earth."

A special series is called "Heroica," and refers to some mysterious form of wealth. In the first painting of this series some aborigines are lowering the treasure from their boat into the sea; in the second, a witch—or a fairy—is cooking some wonder-working herbs in a

silent nook of a sea-cove; then, in *The Command* a message is being sent across the sea, in which action the clouds also seem to take part; the fourth is *The Eternal Fire* burning amid the cold rocks; the fifth is *Ever-expectant* —some women's figures sitting motionless near a fantastic hut, patiently waiting for something great to take place. Then we see *The Death of the Giants*; they are turned into rocks; and then—probably as the result of this achievement—come *The Conquerors of the Treasure*—carrying something from a cave down to a boat.

I say 'probably' because Mr. Roerich says that he does not know anything more about it! He just paints things as they are given to him, without deliberately inventing any details.

The clouds very often form equally telling subjects for Roerich's paintings. There is the famous *Cloud*—nothing in the whole canvas but an immense pale-malachite cloud rising, masterful, over a near horizon. One can gaze at it for hours: it seems to move. *The Knight of the Evening* is embodied in the sharply outlined fogs and clouds of a northern night. Then there is *The Heavenly Battle*—a conflict between clouds of all colours!—and the languid *Fairy of Rain*. *The Sons of Heaven* come in glowing pink clouds to 'the maidens of earth'—which results in the biblical

race of giants (*Genesis*, ch. vi). This painting has been compared to the play of a black opal ; its colouring is superb in the clarity of the deepest and richest tones.

Then there are the various forms and hues of stone, on each occasion playing a special part in the meaning of the picture. For instance, the overwhelming intensity of the cliffs (also in a luxurious darkling colour-scheme) which suggests many ages piled up on the crust of the earth, many eruptions and many floods—while *Ecstasy* alone stands motionless, unheeding in his contemplation. And what an individual rendering of 'ecstasy,' too! An old, old man, with a long, long beard, stalwart and powerful—but no flesh on his upright form.

Here again are the bellying, round towers of the ancient town of Izborsk, silhouetted against the greenish sky with fading stars; some secret deed is taking place here, as those stooping figures of the warriors disappear one after the other down the entrance of *The Secret Passage*. Or, yet another rôle of the stones: a veritable cradle of flame in the hollow between cold rocks: this is *The Heat of the Earth*—and an Angel is standing by it holding his sword in it in order to make it hot with wrath, because there is no wrath in Heaven! He is not enjoying his duty; he is just prepared for the task of bringing his sword down on the heads of some mortals

who have been trying God's patience. And yet more rocks; a peaked range of pale pink, pale opal, mother-of-pearl harmonies; this is *The Limit of the Kingdom*; some old men stand contemplating that threshold between earth and air.

Somewhat singular is the picture called *Confession*; a small, unobtrusive human figure approaching a monastery. That is all. But what an acute, annihilating atmosphere of remorse in every atom of that all-enveloping greyish-yellow air! The walls, the ground, the sky—everything in that half-grey, half-yellow tone embodying the bitterness of self-judgment.

Then there are the concrete subjects of the old Russian legends. For instance, *St. Mercury*, the warrior of old Smolensk, who had a command in a dream to go and fight the Tartars; after that an unknown horseman was to cut his head clean off, and he was to bring it himself back to town, after which he was to be included in the Order of Saints. The painting shows Mercury walking through the town gates and carrying his own head in his hands.

The legends about *St. Procopius* are touching. This Saint was so poor that even the beggars turned him out when he asked for shelter in their hamlet; so the only home he had was the open stone entrance to a church where "a warm wave would float through the air—so

he knew that the Virgin allowed him to dwell there." Once he saw a cloud of stones menacing the town ; he ran out into the field to meet it and prayed ardently, until the cloud changed its course. The picture illustrating the usual work of this Saint as he sits on a high bank " blessing the unknown travellers," fills the onlooker with a profound feeling of relief. One begins to feel as if the Saint, the hills, the distant horizon, the human prayers and yourself were really blending into one harmonious whole.

In Roerich's work the spirit of freedom prevails both in subject and in technique. He ranges from the most translucent, moist, lovingly-gentle chords of colour (almost impossible to reproduce) to a startling effect of the weight of matter. He will apply the first of these mediums where, for instance, *St. Nicholas* is coming out of a morning " to see whether all is peace on earth " ; or, when one of *Our Forefathers* is quietly piping his pipe, and a few bears are happily listening to him, and they are all of them as simple, yet full of meaning, as the green hills receding into the distance ; or, where " an old man came and sat down to live at the side of a wondrous stone " ; or, where a girl has come to *The Edge of the Earth* ; or, where *The Forest Sprites* may turn up at any moment between the trees ; or, where a little man is beyond himself with *The Revelation*

he sees in the skies; or, where a village church is standing lonely in the steppe, as if exchanging thoughts with God; or, *When the Night is Light*—and so on. While the weight of matter is the first thing that arrests your attention where people are *Building a Town*; or, where *The Giants are Dead*; or, where 'the serpent,' sensing the approach of a catastrophe to his native land, raises his head 'to utter a shriek' for once in his life—but sees nothing except sharp, angular, heartless cliffs all around him.

Again, the effect of one predominant colour, or of two colours, is often startling. So it is in *The Order from the Sky*, *The Lurid Glare*, *Dominus*, *The Last Angel*, *The Sacred Spring*, *The Battle of Kerjenetz*, and others.

Even the serene, severe, and sober character of the northern regions is expressed in different ways, according to the inner meaning of the picture; sometimes it is a harmony of contrasts between clear, unadulterated colours, whilst on other occasions it is given through the daintiest scale of blending semi-tones.

Roerich's manner of putting on his paints itself varies from the lightest touch to bold, broad, untrammelled dashes. For instance, what can be more quaint than representing *Italy* as a crystallized, culminating view of some city on a mount—rendered in such a

manner as if it were a fresco crumbling away with the weight of ages! It is a perfect chord of a symbol with a special aspect of technique.

Some of the paintings are done in oil, others in tempera, some in pastel; but the master's soul finds its way through all these channels. It is a usual thing in Russia to hear the expressions: 'Roerich's clouds,' 'Roerich's rocks,' 'Roerich's vistas,' applied not to pictures, but to nature itself. It is as if the artist had opened some new window in people's minds and has given them an additional viewpoint from which they can see more in nature than they could see before. I have heard of many men who, fighting on the Russian front, have written to Roerich interesting letters describing *his* flames and conflagrations, *his* darkness, and *his* visions they saw around them.

Mr. Roerich thinks that this is because he paints all his landscapes as he really visualises them; he studies all his clouds and stones before he re-creates them on his canvas; but then every painter does that —yet it is not every one that opens an additional window in people's mental vision.

Roerich's freedom is not the reckless licence which sometimes finds its self-expression in dwelling on details; on the contrary, he subordinates all details to the leading idea with severe discipline. His freedom

is the freedom of imagination in the higher planes; therefore, it finds its self-expression in the variety of subjects, and it makes him treat each composition as a whole—as a clear note in the harmony of the Universe, and not as a chromatic scale of realistic details. It is only when the details are inseparable from the established style of work that Roerich carries them out with the daintiness of a miniaturist. Such are his numerous ikons and church frescoes. There the grave beauty of the figures dwells within its long-ago-established harmony with the effect of dazzling conventional ornamentation of Byzantine origin.

It is interesting to quote here some paragraphs from the Russian poet Baltrushaitis, who, amongst others, wrote several pages in the beautiful volume published for Roerich's jubilee:

"It is as essential to see the feast of colours in Roerich's paintings with one's own eyes, as it is essential to hear a musical composition with one's own ears, in order to conceive its individual nature. In the very structure of his works there is the presence of some inexplicable musical rhythm, which makes the onlooker not only look at them, but hearken to something with his spiritual hearing.

"Roerich is past-master in colour-harmonies; yet he is so severe with himself that he obviously rejects

the temptation of a colour-play when the idea of his vision does not call for it.

" Roerich's part in social work is not limited by the achievements of his gift. His inner experience merges his creative activity with the whole of the spiritual reconstruction which is taking place in these days. In the realm of his forms and colours Roerich is preoccupied with solving the same problems which have now come to the fore in all modern art. The human soul of our time is strugging for a new conception of the World, for a new Will. Building up a new spiritual attitude in his own sphere Roerich is taking part in reshaping our inner life as a whole.

" Some are likely to come to the conclusion that his works are purely contemplative and detached from life. But this is not so ; they are contemplative only as much as contemplation is essential to creative capacity. Like fresh young shoots, they spring from the eternal will of life and react on it through their own liberating powers.

" Roerich could not win a more beautiful crown than this organic bond between his work and contemporary social evolution in the search for The Holy Grail."

Another contributor to the same jubilee volume, the artist Benois, had been antagonistic to Roerich for a long time ; but this is what he wrote in it in 1916 :

"Roerich is not easy to understand. He has not won me straight away; but the deeper and the safer is now his conquest of my mind. Having remained for some time in the same degree of development, Roerich has made a move ahead, and since then has begun the work of 'the real Roerich'. Since then he has become dear to me, and is growing dearer and dearer.

"However complete and expressive it is now, his art is still ripening, growing still more serene, simple and sure, and its highest achievements are still to come.

"We are of different origin: I am a Southerner, almost a Latin; Roerich is a Northerner, almost a Scandinavian. I am drawn to the slender cypresses, to the domes of the Alps barring the horizon, to the shining azure of the sea; he is the inspired singer of the spongy hills of the North, made soft and shapeless by the ice-drifts, of the sickly silver-birch and spruce, of the shadows running across the steppes. He is thrilled and stands in awe before a moss-covered hamlet, and still more, before the tent of a nomad! whereas I shall not exchange for anything in the world the smartness of San Pietro and the imperial harmony of the Escurial!

"Roerich is attracted by the desert, by distances, by the aborigines, by the first lisp of forms and ideas; he insists on his conception that goodness is in the

powerful simplicity of soul and in Infinity, and thinks that we ought to begin again from the beginning. He would not mind returning to the scanty speech of the aborigines as long as their instincts could be expressed clearly and directly, as long as the untruth and the muddle of so-called civilisation could be kept away. But, as usual, the real truth lies hidden between the two extremes, and we are approaching it from two opposite directions.

"It is a characteristic whim of human fate that Roerich—a 'native,' a 'forefather,' a collector of stones, an excavator of shapeless mounds—is at the head of one of our greatest Russian centres of artistic culture, and is known as one of the most prominent connoisseurs and collectors of paintings of the old Western schools. In my turn, I have acquired in recent years a deeper 'insight into the earth' and her primary laws. Besides San Pietro and the Escurial, I have learned to love that very 'lisp' of Nature and Humanity which inspires Roerich the Varengian.

"From a youthful illustrator of ancient Russia, Roerich has developed into a poet. But, in his self-evolution, he has succeeded in remaining true to his original elements—and therein lies the power of his personality as well as the importance of his part in the general current of our art.

"Roerich remains a typical Norman. Since his illustrations to Maeterlinck's creations he has assimilated Western romanticism and has shown himself not only a great master, but a poet-seer. Some of his sceneries for 'Princess Maleine' and for 'Sister Beatrice' are amazing in their true sense of the mediæval North.

"The philosophical value of Roerich's work is very great. I see in it more than merely artistic individuality. He is the representative of a whole school of thought, even of a whole sphere of culture. For expressing the gist of his philosophy he does not adopt abstract forms, but remains within the circle of concrete images and pictures of life—a life, maybe, remote from and dead to our minds, yet very convincing in its past existence and calling forth a familiar echo in our hearts.

"His figures are lost in his landscape, but that landscape itself has acquired a distinct physiognomy. Roerich's best pictures are those in which Nature is deified, in which the artist is at one with his heroes, the primitive men. He attains special beauty and power when he trembles before the approach of an ireful thunderstorm; or when he contemplates in ecstasy the boundless distances punctuated by the monotonous rhythm of the primitive forms, and prays

to Perun and Yarila—or curses them with shouts of vehemence. Equally beautiful is the kindred spirit of the moon searching for something behind the clouds; or his enthusiastic reading of the future in the hieroglyphics of a *Heavenly Battle.*

"There is something very deep in all this. The innate 'primitiveness' of Roerich, his myths and superstitions, link the cultured social worker, the leading spirit of a modern art school, with the aboriginal inhabitants of our marshes and forests; the all-but-broken threads are reappearing, linking up millenaries of human life.

"Some might wonder: 'What are those animal-like forefathers to us? They are dissolved in Eternity, they are gone and decayed!' But Roerich knows best. He knows that those ancestors of ours possessed a power which is still alive and still good enough for us. Roerich believes in their insight and grieves with them that the black sword of material culture penetrates the breast of Nature, and that the trampling on the Mother-earth grows more and more sacrilegious with men's efforts to turn the stream of her history into channels of absurd material greed. That is where Roerich and I meet each other. I shall never be tired of describing the beautifully wrought forms of the Vatican and the Escurial, while Roerich will continue

his hymns to the vague beauty of the steppes and to the soft expansion of the architecture of the clouds; but we shall speak of the same thing: of Beauty—of that great secret gift which is granted to Man. We two should be not foes but allies and—if God wills it—friends. Our foe is the same: it is the hooliganism of those who want to forget about all the whispers and spells of Nature. To them, all the best buildings, best pictures, and best books are only as a film on the eyes hindering them from keeping their ledgers in order

" True, Roerich's mind and taste are still Varengian: he loves and understands best that land which was conquered and loved by his ancestors; its very austerity gave them health and poured power into their veins. A serene tenderness kindles in Roerich's heart for those firesides where a whole file of his forefathers nursed the men, the girls, the mothers, of their clan. But, at the same time, Roerich has learned from the voices singing in his soul to love and to understand humanity in general. He wants to see guests coming from overseas; he wants to see their lands and all the world in its boundlessness and complexity. He will always gather his health and strength from the soil of his own kindred Novgorod which is saturated with iron, but he will dedicate that strength not to narrow nationalism, but to humanism in the broadest sense.

"At this present hour when peoples are possessed by the devils of enmity and untruth, Roerich withdraws into his desert—as I withdraw into my temples—to create prayers to the Lord of peace and beauty."

Having given this amusingly drawn psychological parallel, I feel nevertheless inclined to quote a few of Roerich's own lines from one of his early literary works, because I know that he has remained true to this conviction:

"There is nothing alarming in the contrast between the beauty of town and the beauty of nature. Just in the same way as fine contrasting colours do not kill each other but form a new powerful chord, so the beauty of nature and the beauty of town dwell hand-in-hand, intensifying each other. They are the two tones of the chord—its third tone being the beauty of the Unknown."

Roerich does believe in culture; only he is convinced that art is a much more lofty international factor of evolution than the 'mechanical civilisation' of the last half-century.

There is no reason to disbelieve the main outlines of the very old Russian legend which says that the ancient Slavs were peaceful, simple people who had no ambition to rule, to command, or to fight; that all they

wanted was to be left in peace at their work on the land. "So they went across the sea to ask the Varengians to come and be their Princes and to rule over them." . . . "Three brothers came and settled down in the Russian Land: Rurik, Sineus, and Truvor." Presently the traces of the two younger of these disappeared; but Rurik was supposed to have started a whole dynasty, the last of which on the Russian throne was Theodor, Ivan the Terrible's son. Then came the so-called 'Tumultuous Times,' after which a young Romanov was elected Tsar—again as the nearest to Prince Rurik's descendants.

I have to remind the reader of this very probable origin of the Russian Rulers (in any case, the Varengian, *i.e.*, Norwegian, merchants and warriors were the first people of their kind to appear on the 'great waterway between the North and the Greek land,' and had all the chance to get into power—whether by invitation or by force!) because I want to mention a most interesting *rêverie* of our modern writer, Alexei Remizov. The beautiful form of his writings disappears in translation because they are given in that ancient Russian speech which has been mentioned before. Many of Roerich's pictures could be best interpreted by means of Remizov's poems inspired directly by the artist's work—but, alas! those poems-in-prose must remain a treasure for

the Russians only, because five words out of every ten have no parallel whatever in the known old English.

Nevertheless, I take my courage in both hands in order to give an approximate rendering of one of Remizov's pages; it is a most interesting *rêverie*, and leads to what may be called a revelation—if you feel inclined to be Theosophical!

"From beyond the sea there appeared, moving into the Russian Land across the quaking marshes, the ice-flows, and the crackling undergrowth, a man hard as flint.

"He made a fierce bonfire and built for himself a town in stone.

"And his throne was of red moss, his crown of moonstone, and his sword and shield of granite.

"Beyond the seas and the mists the tale spread of the Viking who went away and did not return. The Skalds composed a saga about him, the Giants mused and wondered—Why was there no sign of the Viking for so long a time? The grey-haired Morun worked spells in watching his waves—but, 'No,' said the waves, 'the Viking will never return.' Oblemay himself—of a brighter green than the green of the sea-grass—having licked his blind, cold cubs for the night, would tell them the long tale about the Viking who went over to the Russian Land.

"And his throne was of red moss, his crown of moonstone, and his sword and shield of granite.

"From beyond the Varengian Sea moved Viking the Flint into the Russian Land, along serpents' paths, and settled in his stone town.

"In the blue twilight of the autumn he would ascend his tower, and his eyes glowed like blue flames in the blue mist; they could see as far as beyond the third sea. And in the night the noydas of Lapland would join him and weave their spells o'er the stony range, o'er the wind, and o'er the waves.

"And the glare from the bonfires spread for miles around the town, hot and high. Like one born of the Russian Land, the Viking started putting it into shape.

"He went with Sviatoslav to Tsargrad [Constantinople], and saw what he never could forget: an Angel in the fiery skies, and a winged fire, and blue arrows that came down on the fleet of Russian boats, burning them.

"He heard Perun [Jupiter] yell in anguish in christened Novgorod, and saw him toss and beat against the bank of the Volhov River.

"He saw the Hungari appear from beyond the Ural Mountains and cross the Russian Land and vanish, darkling, behind the Carpathian Range.

"He was with Prince Igor on the Kayal River, and he will never forget the lament and the tears when

the treason of the Russian Princes opened to the foe the gates of the Russian Land.

"One after another the centuries passed; and, resting under a snow-clad stone, he heard the Terrible Tsar Ivan raging recklessly over the Russian Land.

"Then the last threads of memory sank into darkness.

"More centuries went by.

"And then there again appeared a man—and settled in Petersburg on the Moyka: no more from the Varengian Sea, but from Kostroma Town; and no more Rorik (as they called Rurik in Old Novgorod)—but Roerich.

"And again, as of old, he built for himself a stone town. The memory came back to him as in a dream, and he told us about the rocks and about the seas where he used to sail with his Friendships of Warriors, about the giants and the serpent and the noydas, about the Terrible Angel, and about how Russia was being built up, and how the treason of the Russian Princes opened to the foe the gates of the Russian Land.

His Blue is the Blue of the Northern Twilight;
His Green is the Green of the sea-grass;
His Red is the Red of bonfires,
And his Flame—from Byzantine arrows."

"He built for himself a stone town—as roomy and as free as the Old Novgorod that was its own Master—and the glare from his bonfires is again spreading hot and high over the Russian Land."

ROERICH'S MESSAGE

By Alexander Kaun

NICHOLAS ROERICH is one of the noblest sons of spiritual Russia, for he is wondrously synthetic. One is struck by his versatility: jurist, poet, publicist, professor of archæology, director of an art school, member of the Academy, president of "The World of Art" Association, etc., etc. As a painter Roerich has produced frescoes for churches, palaces, public buildings, and designs for drama, opera, ballet; he has gauged the Stone Age, has plumbed complex modernity, and has endeavoured to fathom the dim future; he has instilled life into old Russian architecture, has re-created folk legends, both secular and ecclesiastic, and he has given expression to the inexpressible—to the twilight of our consciousness. But it is not versatility that composes Roerich's major force. The essence of his irresistible appeal lies in the unity of his complex personality, in the rhythmic oneness of his multifarious motives, in the synthetic harmony which pervades the universe created by his brush. A descendant of the Norse vikings, Roerich typifies composite Russia, happily combining in his person the vigour of the Varengians with the spontaneous

expansiveness of the Slavs, the exact knowledge of the West with the mystic wisdom of the East. He typifies Russia, for the history of his country presents a continuous, painful striving toward a synthesis—political, ethical, spiritual, economic.

Roerich opposes contemporary civilisation, precisely because it is mechanistic, because it lacks unity but bristles with multiplicity. He refuses to accept a disunited universe, split into divergent elements, differentiated into matter and spirit, nature and man, reason and feeling, past, present, and future. As against mechanistic civilisation, Roerich champions spiritual culture, a synthesis of 'wisdom and beauty,' based on the conviction of a perpetual universal unity. His art might use for its motto Carlyle's dictum that "There is a divine idea pervading the visible universe". Instead of reproducing the visible world, Roerich, as a true artist, recreates this world in his mind, immerses it in the calm waves of contemplation, and brings it forth radiant and pervaded with 'the divine idea'. With the imperious persuasiveness of a creator he breathes life into earth's 'wrinkles of thought'—its rocks and hills, gorges and canyons, he instils a throb into his trees and huts, churches and towers, ramparts and vessels, he bewings his clouds and shapes them into knights and dragons and messengers, he bestows a rhythm of vitality

upon his rivers and seas, and creatures under the sea, he brings down the moon and stars in a choral dance, down to where we can reach and pluck them, and thus fulfil the dream every one of us dreamed in his childhood. For life is a saga to Roerich the Norseman, a fairy-tale pregnant with that mystery of awe, of whose thrill Goethe said :

Das Schaudern ist der Menschheit bestes Teil.

The three poems here presented express succinctly Roerich's simple faith and his wistful quest for the 'sacred signs'. The translator has aspired to nothing more ambitious than preserving the original essence, and he regrets to admit only a partial success.

THE GUARDS AT THE GATES

We were told : 'forbidden.'
But we entered, nevertheless.
We are approaching the gates.
Everywhere we've heard the word : 'forbidden.'
We have desired to see the signs.
They told us : 'forbidden.'
We wished to kindle the light.
They told us : 'forbidden.'

O hoary guards, ye who have seen, ye who know !
You are in error, O guards !
The Master has permitted to know.
To see the Master has permitted.
Surely, 'tis his wish
That we know,
That we see.

Behind the gates a messenger stands.
He has brought for us something.
Let us in, O guards!

'Forbidden,' we were told.
And they shut the gates.
But still many gates
We've passed through. Squeezed through.
And 'permitted' has been left behind us.
The guards at the gates watched us.
And besought us, and threatened us.
Warned us.
Everywhere we were reminded: 'forbidden.'
Forbidden everything. Forbidden about everything.
Forbidden toward everything.
And only behind us was: 'permitted.'
But on the last gates
'Permitted' will be inscribed.
'Forbidden' will lie behind us.
Thus ordered inscribed
The Master, on the last gates.

THE SACRED SIGNS

We do not know. But they know.
The rocks know. Even the trees know.
And remember.
Remember who named mountains and rivers.
Who laid cities that are no more.
Who gave names to lands no longer remembered.
Words unknown to us. They are all full of meaning.
Everything is full of heroic deeds.
Everywhere heroes passed through.
To know, is a dulcet word. To remember, is an awesome word.
To know and to remember. To remember and to know.
This means—to believe.

Aerial ships soared. Liquid fire poured forth. Flashed the spark of life and death.
By the power of the spirit rose masses of rocks.
A wondrous blade was forged.
The runes guarded the wise secrets. And once anew all is clear. All is new. The saga-tradition became life.
And once again we live. And once again we shall change.
And once again we shall hug the earth.
The great 'to-day' will grow dim to-morrow.
But forth will spring the sacred signs.
Then, when the time will come,
They will not be noticed. Who knows? But they will build up life.
Where, then, are the sacred signs?

* * * * *

We are going in search of the sacred signs.
We are going with caution, and in silence.
Men go by; they laugh, bid us to follow them.
Others hasten, in displeasure.
Others still threaten us.
They want to take from us that which we have.
They know not, the passers-by, that we have come out
To search for the sacred signs.
But they who threaten will pass on.
They have so much to do.
While we shall seek the sacred signs.
No one knows where the Master
Has left the sacred signs.
Most likely, they are on the stones by the road.
Or on the roots of the trees.
Or on flowers, or on the waves of the river.
We think that one may seek them
On the vaults of the clouds.
To the light of the sun, to the light of the moon;
To the light of the pitch and bonfire;
To the light of the fire-flies of St. John.

We shall seek the sacred signs.
Long we've been walking,
And we look fixedly.
Many men have passed us by.
In truth, it would seem they know
The command : To find the sacred signs.
It is growing dark.
'Tis hard to discern the road.
Incomprehensible seem the places.
Where may they be,
The sacred signs ?
To-day we shall, perhaps,
No longer find them.
But to-morrow will be light.
I know, we shall perceive them.

NICHOLAS ROERICH

By Joseph Finger

THE traveller in Russia idling away at some railroad station may find his attention arrested by some powerfully executed mural decorations depicting scenes and occurrences of prehistoric North Russia or some legendary folk story. Upon investigation he may learn from the genial station-master that Nicholas Roerich has painted those scenes. On visiting churches, monasteries and cathedrals abundantly scattered through the vast expanses of the Russian land, this traveller may contemplate with veneration magnificent fresco works depicting incidents of high emotional value. The communicative monk-guide may point out to the beholder that those frescoes and ikonostases have been painted by N. Roerich. Next at a theatrical performance this traveller may read that the fantastic scenery has been executed by the same artist. And, by this time, rummaging among books in a book-shop will he be surprised to pick up a few volumes by N. K. Roerich?

Some twenty-five odd years ago N. Roerich for the first time exhibited at the Petrograd Academy a canvas that won him immediate recognition and

gained him entrance into the inner art circles of Russia. The canvas—*The Messenger: Tribe Riseth against Tribe*—was an ambitiously conceived prelude to a "Russia" series, unfortunately for many reasons never completed. Roerich's name and work have since become known in every Russian home whenever art is spoken of, and there is scarcely a place of any importance in Russia where this versatile and forceful personality has not left in some way a deep imprint.

Beginning his career as an artist at the time when the Russian art innovators were mustering their forces, N. Roerich joined the ranks of the buoyant generation who invaded the sacred shrines of the pseudo-national and 'true to nature' schools. The carcass of Naturalism was swept into oblivion; and new broad avenues for self-expression were laid. In pictorial art a brilliant galaxy of creative talents burst forth and the merry carnival of this renaissance was led by Somov, Roerich, Serov, and Vroubel. Self-reliance and a creative message were the only articles of the new faith in art.

Such has been the magnetic personality of Roerich that he has won the love and respect of various, often diametrically opposed, schools and movements in Russia. . . .

Roerich's veritable passion for work, his astounding prolificacy must have been, I fancy, the cause of continuous annoyance to his many critics, arduous commentators and biographers. Indeed, Mr. Roerich will relate to you good-humouredly the tribulations of a distinguished Russian scholar and art critic who for many a month had been laboriously working over an appreciation of Roerich's Art, but who had thrown up this task finally; each time this critic's manuscript would be ready to go to the press, a dozen newly painted canvases would necessitate a revision of the text, and, perhaps, an addition of a few illuminating chapters. We are told that the unhappy man had appealed once to the good sense of the artist to restrain the latter's swift flow of imagination.

It was not the themes of Roerich's canvases that brought him into prominence. It was his sharp departure from the tenets of the quasi-Russian historical school of painting, with its painstaking perfection of detail but complete failure to interpret the spirit of the depicted epochs. Roerich, on the other hand, eliminated everything that did not contribute to the understanding of the inner sense of the scenes. True, the deadly influence of this 'Russian' School had been earlier combatted by the well-known Surikov, Riaboushkin and the brothers Vasnetzob; Roerich's

paintings, however, with crushing effect dealt probably the severest blow to that school.

In the presence of Roerich's works one immediately grasps their basic significance and rhythm. The 'style' is distinct and individual, in fact a 'Roerich Style,' which has no counterpart anywhere. It is quite useless to characterise in any critical formula the whole temper of an artist who is a law to himself and who himself vehemently resents being chained to any particular art tradition, much more to a school. Yet, protesting his opposition to a routine, he is aware of the many beneficent influences to which he has been subjected but which he has mastered to his needs. Landscape, genre and historical painting all claim him, but he insists that these subdivisions are arbitrary and not real. And Roerich's canvases speak with convincing power of the truth of his assertion.

Roerich's initial compositions are clearly reminiscent of the impressions of his early childhood. They awakened in him memories of a peculiar charm. They recalled the happy time when as a child he had roamed through the fields and forests and hills on his father's estates in Northern Russia. Those regions were at that time engaging the attention of the Russian archæologists on account of important excavations.

Young Roerich learned then many Russian legends and tales of hidden treasures under the tumuli round which he had so often played. During the long northern winter nights he would listen spellbound to a recital of the deeds and adventures of the ancient Varengian mariners. He listened to the captivating story of the house of Rurik, his Norman ancestor, who, history relates, originated one of the oldest Russian ruling dynasties at the unique invitation of the Slavs. "Our land is rich and plentiful," said they, "but full of dissension; come and rule us."

Nicholas Roerich turns to the Past for inspiration. And the Past to him is a spacious grandfather's study where he finds many wise and magical things. Page after page he reads in dusty folios of the wonderful occurrences of the bygone days. In the soul of the people dwells the poetry of the past, the most intimate of all poetry. Through the bleak and austere land of North Russia, through the groves and hills of the pagan gods, traverses the imagination of Roerich, and to him is revealed the spirit and rhythm of ancient Russia. Through a secret passage the artist enters into the realm of the remote past where men and trees are rocks, and beasts are men. He learns the hieroglyphics of the stones, and solitude speaks to him in ponderous masses of rocks and cliffs. The artist's poetic vision resuscitates

the past and we behold the mysteries of epochs long gone by. Whether it be a landscape, or a mass of clouds, or an idyllic scene of bear-like aborigines, or some mysterious deed, we know that the painter has a definite idea of what he has to express and how to express it. We perceive at once the simplicity and joy in the *Call of the Sun*; we are impressed by the plaints of the Moon and the sorrowful story of the dead giants turned into rocks; Morning, Evening and Night ride in chariots of misty clouds and fogs; there is the treasure of the angels and the Lord of Night makes his appointed rounds.

Roerich has made a profound study of ancient Russia and devoted much time to archæology. In 1900 he exhibited in Paris the *Old Wise Men's Council* which brought him much fame. A sojourn in that city under the wise guidance of Cormon widened his horizon and enriched his mental vision; yet, strange to say, only intensified the artist's longing for themes of truly Russian character. While in Paris he paints canvases telling the mystery of the ancient Slavic land, her idols, overhanging clouds and pagan rites. To this period belong several variants of *The Idols*, *Before the Battle*, *The Battle*, *The Terrible Portents* and *The Wolves*—showing a new, pronounced, symbolic note. Was it an intuition, or a mere coincidence that

these canvases were soon followed by 'bloody Sundays,' massacres and wars?

The simplicity and rigour of North and North-western Russia were revealed to Roerich during his long travels in those regions. He records his impressions; with love and care studies the ancient monuments and sanctuaries; hastens from place to place, from church to church; talks to aged monks and peasants and deplores the sacrilegious inroad of our 'mechanistic' civilisation.

"Whenever we approach the question of antiquity"—writes N. Roerich—"we light at once on hints and fragments of broken inscriptions, ruins of arches, decaying foundations. Moreover, even yet the attentive ear may hear stories in abundance of frescoes beneath plaster, of the removal of a brick from a monument for a new building, of the devastation of the site of a former town for the necessities of a railroad. . . . Grim towers and walls are overgrown and concealed by birch and shrubs; ancient ikonostases are disfigured by vulgar, though well-intentioned, offerings. All has lost its real character; the cabinet carefully set in by a grandsire is now turned into a dusty receptacle of rubbish. Superb ancient brickwork is turned into factory sheds; historical walls are pulled down to extend a tramway . . . But, look at the temples of Rostov and Yaroslavl . . . What wonderful harmonies surround you! How daring is the blend of sky-blue aerial tones with the reddest ochre. How light is the emerald green and grey and how red and brown garments show to advantage against it. Across a lukewarm, bright ground fly terrible angels with thick yellow halos and their white tunics a shade colder than the ground. Nowhere does the gilding offend the eye, the little crowns shine with ochre only. As for the walls, they are like the finest velvet, meet to drape the house

of God. The interior of the temple caresses and soothes us, and prayer here is better than in buildings of gold and silver . . . "

Unlike the many pseudo-Russian religious painters Roerich's eager interest in sacred art was a natural outgrowth of profound study of Byzantine and Oriental art, especially that of old Persia. His religious frescoes and church paintings are imbued with a reverent poetic mood and his wonderful treatment is in harmonious unison with the sublime theme.

Ancient North Russia on the borderland of legend and history is an open book to Nicholas Roerich. Far and wide stretches the land of the ancient Slavs. For plunder come swooping down the wild Asiatic hordes. From Byzantium come the harbingers of a new and wondrous faith proclaiming the glory of the Son of God. From beyond the Varengian Sea sail the adventurous Norman vikings, tall and firm as granite rocks. In boats of unheard splendour sail the chiefs down the Volchov River and the overseas guests carry precious gifts to the Russian princes. Through marshes and lakes the sturdy warriors of the North cross the vast expanses of the Russian land, settle and build towns of stone and wood and some knock at the gates of Tzargrad. . . .

Trolls and fairies, the custodians of the wonderland, flung open its doors to Roerich's imagination.

The artist walks through the enchanted palaces of Tzar Saltan and Tzar Gvidon. Birds of queer plumage soar in the skies. Weird creatures of popular imagination engendered in old antiquity are given flesh and blood in Roerich's compositions. Roerich sets out on a pilgrimage to the 'people,' traverses the happy valleys of Berendey's Kingdom and rests on the shores of Ledenetz.

Roerich is fascinated by the tales and songs of the haunted world of spells of Russia. In that world dwell the demonical, unclean spirits and gnomes, elves and sprites and fairies—the imagery of a naïve imagination, the creative effort of the popular mind that colours the old legends and myths with the sorrows, joy and wisdom of the day. Solemn stories from *Genesis* are strangely interwoven with myths and fairy-tales. Mysterious arrows are sent from heavens to St. Tiron. Procopius the Righteous blesses the waylaid travellers and Saints Boris and Gleb sing God's praise. Knights of unspeakable beauty guard a city from danger, and the pagan god of Spring, the shepherd Lehl, pipes his merry song to all creation.

Themes of Russian folk stories and legends are also embodied in Roerich's scenic decorations. These are not mere illustrations to opera, ballet or drama texts, but inspired colour symphonies, each symphony conceived in a distinct colour-key which expresses the basic idea of the

stage production. Early in his career he became one of the leading spirits among the stage innovators in Serge Diaghilev's circle. The genius of Rimsky-Korsakov, one of the 'mighty group,' struck a deep responsive chord in Roerich's soul. There is the "Tzar Saltan" Series, full of delightful oriental transplendency and sprinkled with the healthy, lively wit of Great Russia. There are also the incomparable "Prince Igor," "Sadko" and "Snegourochka" Series where everything is so unreal and grotesque; and yet it is difficult to tell where the legendary ends and history begins. . . .

These are times of profound changes, revaluation of values, new spiritual attitudes and search for new paths for souls in anguish. The soul of the artist as a delicate instrument vibrates to the clamour of these restless days and strings are tuned to universal throbbings. Roerich's heart grows bigger as his imagination kindles and reveals to us the spirit of past epochs. Yet the Past to him is a mountain whence his creative genius swings from broad planes of humanism to still higher summits of the Cosmos. No longer do the retrospective and national concepts stir the artist. He turns to the interpretation of truths of universal significance and, as early as 1913-1914, he paints a series of canvases, the full prophetic meaning of which he himself was not aware of at the time. In the

Cry of the Serpent a warning of danger is issued to the encircled city; *The Lurid Glare* is a vision of a prostrated Belgium; in *Human Deeds*, the ruins of a city are contemplated by a group of old men; and there is an apocalyptic sense of crisis in the *Last Angel* appearing over the world in flames. . . .

Roerich never deserts Nature. He is her faithful son. "Man," says he, "cannot be the King of Nature; he is her pupil. I have never felt inclined to paint mere portraits. Man's place in the Universe—that is what is important." Roerich's art makes a direct appeal and we are made to feel the truth and *Rhythm* of life. And life is everywhere in Roerich's works—in rocks and mountains, in the heavenly battle of clouds, in the mysteriously hidden treasures, and in the valleys of the pagan gods Perun and Yarila.

Now that the painter has attained full maturity and firmness, wise with the knowledge of the past, stirred by the beauties of his native land and Humanity, he pierces the limitless spaces of the Cosmos Implacable and in ecstasy beholds new beauty and truth. An eloquent message he brings of the eternal unity of all forms of life, and of this unity he speaks to us in colour symphonies of the finest gossamery silver, portentous ebony, ethereal gray, deepest blue, emerald, soft purple, black opal and mother-of-pearl.

Art, Roerich knows, is not a luxury but an indispensable element of human existence. Art is the universal language of the world, a 'Fourth International' destined to bind the nations into one large and joyous family. And the painter dreams of a great and a beautiful temple built in some art centre, the meeting-place of all arts. With characteristic earnestness Roerich points to the crying need of a great Democracy of Art, an institution capable and strong enough to defend art against the heavy paws of the Vandal.

NICHOLAS ROERICH AND HIS WORK

By I. DE MANZIARLY

Beyond all the Russias exists one unforgettable Russia.
Beyond all love exists universal Love.
Beyond all beauty exists one Beauty leading to the knowledge of the Cosmos.

—*Roerich*

WE mistrust the artists who talk about art, because too many of them are bad artists. We do not like theoretical creations (often they are devoid of inspiration) yet we dream of artists who would be mystics, and seers and prophets to help us, to explain to us the meaning of beauty. In Nicholas Roerich we have such an artist. His art comes first, it is great and beyond criticism. His art is a fact, an event, a revelation. All countries should have an exhibition of his paintings, because it is impossible to describe them.

He is a seer, and he paints his vision. Not in a queer ultra-modern subjective way, which is intelligible only to the creator: he paints what he sees, beautiful poesy, therefore beautiful truth! He possesses a real kingdom of his own, and he shares it with humanity. It is as though he has the power to bring us into his dreams. We have beautiful dreams, but we cannot take our friends into them—he can. He has his own

hues, his own images, his own beauty, and he objectifies (projects) his subjective world for us.

He looks upon his talent as a trust, a God-given mission. To the power of artistic creation he adds a heart full of love, a wise conceiving mind and an activity which realises dreams.

Nicholas Roerich is a painter, a poet, and a mystic, a practical mystic who not only loves, but acts too.

We cannot describe his paintings; let us hope that the whole world will see them. But we can give you an idea of his poetical work.

The proceeds of his book—*Flowers of Morya*—are sent to starving Russia. The contents of his book will feed hungry souls. The poetic world of Roerich is a mystical world; some will not have access to it; but such great artists as Andreyev and Gorki had.

It is difficult to translate these poems, they are so simple. Every word is the simplest word, and not one stands there for the sake of effect: they are so simple in order not to shut out the spiritual light which shines through them.

Four sections we find in the book:

I.—Sacred Signs.

II.—To the Blessed.

III.—To the Boy.

IV.—Directions to the Trapper Entering the Wood.

"To Him" belongs to the first section.

TO HIM

After long search I found the solitary Sage—
The Sage whom, thou knowest, it is so difficult
To find here upon Earth.
And having found him,
I craved of him that he would show me my path
And that, of his grace, he would accept my works.
But he, gazing long and fixedly upon me,
Inquired of me what thing, of all, I held most dear.
I answered, "Beauty."
Then he: "Whatsoever is dearest,
That must thou abandon!"
"Whose," asked I,
"Is that commandment?" "God's," he said.
"Then," quoth I,
"God's judgment be upon me!—never, never,
Shall I abandon the Beautiful—
The Beautiful, which is the path to Him!"

That is Roerich's Gospel of Beauty.

"Find God through beauty." "Make the World beautiful." "Create beauty in yourselves." And rather will he disobey God's commands than the commands of Beauty.

"Love"—belongs to the second section.

Smile to unintelligible speech, to apparently threatening sounds, because we know not if the strangers speak not of love in their own tongues. Many things we do not understand; are we sure that they do not hide love? And Roerich's heart says: "Credit them with love."

Heigho! What a day!—Such hosts of people
Thronging in upon us unexpectedly
And bringing with them others,
Utter strangers like themselves!
Before they came
I had no chance of asking who they were;
And the worst of it was that one and all conversed
In tongues that were completely unintelligible.
And I, as I listened to their uncouth babel,
Smiled; for the speech of one
Was like the screaming of a mountain eagle;
Another's had the hissing of a serpent;
In some I caught the howl of wolves.
Anon the talk took on a hard glitter, as of metal;
It had a threatening sound,
As of the rattle of stones down mountain sides,
Or the pelting of hail,
Or the roaring of cataracts.
—Yet I smiled. How was it possible for me
To catch the meaning of what they said?
Possibly they were all repeating, each in his own language,
The word we hold so dear—
The word "Love"!

"Kill not" is the expression of the feeling of Unity, Buddhic Unity: insects, birds, animals, and men are one—the life of all is precious. Do not except the man; do not think the rest does not matter. Do we know where murder begins?

KILL NOT?

The boy killed a beetle;
It was that he might know it the better.
He slew a bird;

It was that he might examine it the more closely.
A beast he slaughtered
For information's sake.
And then he asked: "May not one,
In quest of knowledge and well-being,
Kill also a man?
If it be permitted to kill
A bird or an animal,
Why not a human being too?"

The fourth section begins with a dedication:

"To the trapper entering the wood."

If it is Roerich from Russia who gave it
Take it!
If it is Allal-Ming-Shri-Tshvara from Tibet who gave it:
Take it!

Here, in this poem, we hear the call to action: the trapper with his strong net shall go where his prey waits for him.

"Trapper, know your path yourself—don't believe those who call, those who give information; you only, you alone, know your own catch. You will not be satisfied with the small spoil, nor disheartened by obstacles."

"I know you will not stop nor hesitate, nor lose your way."

"Finishing your hunt, repair your net, conceive a new catching. Do not be afraid, and do not frighten. Plan simply. Everything is simple. The beautifully

thought is beautiful. All fear will be conquered by your indomitable being."

"If the tired speak against the hunt, do not listen: he weakens you, this one blinded by doubt. What will be his catch? What will he bring home?"

"The trapper is destined to his catch; do not listen to the hours of weariness. In these hours you are not the trapper, but the prey."

"If the first day of hunting you do not find your booty, do not be worried—your booty is on the way to you."

That is Roerich's Gospel of Action.

In the *Herald* he spoke about his work—*Cor Ardens*; he has not yet spoken about his Master School of United Arts in New York.

Indeed, Roerich is the rare, rare artist we hoped for, the synthetic artist of the new, united world, the rare and priceless artist, whose vision of beauty reflects itself in art, wisdom, love, and sacrifice.

ROERICH

By SERGE WHITMAN

BESIDES being an artist whose work has stirred innumerable visitors to his exhibitions, Nicholas Roerich may be called an artist of artists. For it is rarely that a living master has won from his contemporaries the admiration which has been accorded Roerich by his fellow artists in every field. It is an unusual symposium that one may present of those who have been stirred by his art.

Of his paintings, Rabindranath Tagore wrote :

Your pictures which I saw in your room and some reproductions of your pictures which appeared in some art journal profoundly moved me. They made me realise one thing which is obvious and yet which one needs to discover for oneself, over and over again ; it is that truth is infinite. When I tried to find words to describe to myself what were the ideas which your pictures suggested, I failed. It was because the language of words can only express a particular aspect of truth, and the language of pictures finds its domain in truth where words have no access. Each art achieves its perfection where it opens for our mind the special gate whose key is in its exclusive possession. When a picture is great we should not be able to say what it is, and yet we should see it and know. It is the same with music. When one art can fully be expressed by another, then it is a failure. Your pictures are distinct and yet are not definable by words—your art is jealous of its independence because it is great.

Roerich has drawn words of appreciation and admiration from intellectuals all over the world.

The new era is coming in our life. And this is testified by the manifestation of powerful artistic individualities, who strike us by the harmony of their natures and with the profundity of their creation. Among these happy ones, stands the colourful and deeply original creative figure of Roerich.

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There is an exceptional destiny in the artistic life of M. Roerich. He has won his renown remarkably, taking it with a logical clarity and a spirit of rare decisiveness.

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The attainment of the latest of Roerich's creations is the searching for the simplest, broadest, strongest, colourful expression, which is harmonising with the spiritual path of the master, so beautiful in its purity and strength.

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Roerich is one of the most characteristic figures in Russian Art. His name during twenty years manifests the fame of Russian culture.

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In the versatility of Roerich's creations is to be seen a unique personality, loving Russia deeply. The Roerich exhibition is a deep joy for every Russian.

* * * * *

Roerich has enormous power and force, yet without ever 'forcing'. His drawing has the same remarkable power and breadth and is intellectual as well as emotional. His painting may be described as at once scholarly, scientific and fearless; added to this there is the poetry of the mystic who is a worshipper of nature, a Walt Whitman in painting, in a sense.

* * * * *

Roerich is not only Russian, but human in the broadest sense. He devotedly follows his own path, linking up for him humanity with the spirit of the cosmos.

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Like Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, and Dostoievsky, he is one of the towering geniuses of Russian history—like all the great men of Russia his work manifests a prophetic tendency and deep religious feeling without being in the least didactic. Roerich's art speaks to us a language without words, a language that is sacred and universal; it is the language of intrinsic symbols which, like the language of the magicians of the Dark Ages, was meant to perform miracles in everyday life.

* * * * *

Bearing his torch, Nicholas Roerich, painter and prophet, now turns his steps eastwards. For he has already departed from America for an extended trip to the Orient and will arrive in Bombay by the fall.

For India, Roerich's visit is undoubtedly portentous, for this trip means a new step in the progress of a master spirit which knows no boundaries and whose vision transcends a single nationality.

It seems incredible that Roerich's stay in America was but a scant two years, for during that time his influence was tremendous and the impress left by his luminous personality upon the spiritual and artistic life of that country cannot be forgotten.

The results of his rotary exhibition of some two hundred paintings, which was seen in twenty-eight cities in America, has been felt in the great response from

the people and from the younger artists who have found in his work a new goal towards which to strive. The personal tributes and distinctions to him, as man and artist, are too numerous to cite, but all attest reciprocal tribute to the artist who first welcomed to Russia American art and who proved his belief in our artistic future. Roerich's own artistic creation was also augmented in America, for in his most recent works, "Sancta" Series and "Messiah" Series, he reached perhaps his most ennobled expression.

Roerich leaves to America several monuments. First, the two institutions which he founded and of which he is honorary president: The Master Institute of United Arts and Corona Mundi, Inc. Then there stands the remembrance of his visit, in the Roerich Museum founded by his American devotees and possessing some three hundred of his paintings. This is the first time a contemporary artist has been so honoured as to see, during his lifetime, the foundation of a permanent museum devoted entirely to his art.

Of the institutions founded by Roerich, the first of these is one of the greatest departures in the teaching of arts. It unites under one roof the teaching of all creative work and promises for the future, the demolishment of the barriers which have been raised between the various arts. For its motto, the Master Institute

has gone to the writings of Roerich: "Art will unify all humanity. Art is one . . . indivisible. Art has its many branches, yet all are one. Art is the manifestation of the coming synthesis. Art is for all. Everyone will enjoy true art. The gates of the 'Sacred Source' must be wide open for everybody and the light of art will influence numerous hearts with a new love. At first this feeling will be unconscious, but after all it will purify human consciousness. And how many young hearts are searching for something real and beautiful! So, give it to them. Bring art to the people where it belongs. We should have not only museums, theatres, universities, public libraries, railway-stations and hospitals but even prisons decorated and beautified. Then we shall have no more prisons."

And again it is the demolishment of barriers, those between the public and the artist, that is the aim of Corona Mundi, Inc., International Art Centre, which is protecting the results of art. Roerich has also given the tenets for the organisation from his writings: "Humanity realises that all occurrences are not accidental. The time for the construction of future culture is at hand. Before our eyes the revaluation of values is being witnessed. Amidst ruins of valueless banknotes, mankind has found the real value of the world's significance. The values of great

art are victoriously traversing all storms of earthly commotions. Even the 'earthly' people already understand the vital importance of active beauty. And when we proclaim Love, Beauty, Action, we know verily that we pronounce the formula of the international language, and this formula, which now belongs to the museum and stage, must enter everyday life. The sign of beauty will open all sacred gates. Beneath the sign of beauty we walk joyfully. With beauty we pray. In beauty we are united. And now we affirm these words —not on the snowy heights, but amidst the turmoil of the city. And realising the path of true reality, we greet with a happy smile the future."

And already these institutions have wrought into a vital actuality these ideals. For the Master Institute has enlisted the most representative of the younger artists of America. With Nicholas Roerich, Honorary President, we find Louis L. Horch, President, Maurice Lichtman, Vice-President and Frances R. Grant, Executive Director, as the officers; and among the faculty are Alfred Bossom, Alberto Bimboni, George Bellows, Claude Bragdon, William Coad, Frederic Jacobi, Robert Edmund Jones, Sina Lichtmann, Nicola Montani, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, Carlos Salzado, Albert Sterner, Deems Taylor, Stark Young and many others of similarly wide international standing. And

under its roof classes in all branches of art are flourishing.

Through Corona Mundi, Inc., which is arranging exhibitions and lectures, the simple souls of America to whom formerly art was remote and unapproachable, are beginning to walk intimately with Beauty. Corona Mundi has welcomed the expressions of all races and has sought to show America the strength of creative art in every field.

And in his work for America, India must find also tremendous hope in Roerich's coming. Towering figure as he was in Russia wielding the highest influence upon her art life, Roerich came to America. Here again he kindles new fires, their blue flames are mounting skywards already. He goes to the East with joyful steps, for he has a special kinship with the Orient. Years ago, it will be remembered, Roerich was one of those who assisted in the building of the Buddhist Temple in Petrograd and his soul is filled with the spirit of the Ancient Teaching. It will also be remembered that the father of Mme. Roerich gave the project for the building of the most beautiful synagogue in Petrograd. Thus, besides their great understanding of Beauty, both Professor and Mme. Roerich have within them the great understanding of the unifying truths of all faiths. And it is this star which urges them to further quests.

It was in 1914, that the artist for the first time decorated the altar of the Church of the Holy Ghost in Talashkino with a fresco representing the Mother of the World. In it we find features common both to an Orthodox Mother of God and to a Catholic Madonna. In the religious ornamentation of the fresco we trace influences of the ancient cultures of Central Asia, India, and Persia. In its choice of colours this exceptional fresco happily brings together the East and the West.

What he has done for America and Russia, undoubtedly Roerich shall do for India. His spirit has quaffed from the springs of yesterday and to-morrow and his presence is a summons to achievement. In him undoubtedly the Orient shall find inspiration and her ancient beauties shall be stirred to new life. For he comes verily, bearing his torch, and in the darkness of our present day, it brings a prophetic light—the promise of international peace through Beauty, through Art.

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